The SWAN Trust Smartphone Policy

Introduction and Aims: At The SWAN Trust, we recognise that smartphones are an integral part of daily life for adults, but we are increasingly concerned about the ownership and use of smartphones for our children.

Our policy aims to:

- Promote safe and responsible phone use.
- Set clear guidelines for the use of smartphones by, staff, parents, and volunteers.
- Support the school's other policies, especially those related to safeguarding, child protection, behaviour and use of ICT.

Impact of Smartphone Use on Children:

- **Developmental Concerns:** Research indicates that early exposure to smartphones can negatively impact children's mental health, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Smartphone use in children can significantly impact children's sleep, leading to a higher risk of poor sleep quality, reduced sleep duration, and daytime sleepiness
- **Educational Concerns:** Research indicates that use of a smartphone can be a contributing factor to children's lack of ability to concentrate and to have reduced attention spans.
- **Family Concerns:** Smartphone use can be addictive and can cause family conflict as children struggle to come off smartphones. Additionally, any family member can be distracted by their smartphone, reducing the opportunity to develop language and communication skills and build family relationships. We would encourage all families to be conscious of how smartphones are used by all members of the household and the impact this can have on their children.
- **Alternative Activities:** We will encourage children to engage in outdoor play, face-to-face interactions, and other non-screen activities to support their physical and mental development.
- **Parental Guidance:** Parents are advised to delay providing smartphones to children until they reach the age of 14. This helps ensure that children develop healthy habits and coping mechanisms before being exposed to the potential risks associated with smartphone use.

Smartphone Use:

- **Educational Purpose:** Smartphones will not be used to enhance learning and support educational activities. Other devices such as Chromebooks, ipads and desktop computers will be utilised.

- **Safety and Security:** Ensuring the safety and security of children is paramount. Smartphones must not be used in ways that compromise the safety of any individual.
- **Respect and Responsibility:** We will teach children, through the curriculum, how to use smartphones and other technologies respectfully and responsibly, understanding the impact their actions can have on themselves and others.
- **Digital Citizenship:** We will teach children to be responsible digital citizens, understanding the importance of privacy, appropriate online behaviour, and the consequences of cyberbullying.

Phones for Children:

- **No Smartphones Allowed:** Children are not permitted to bring smartphones to school. *(The one exception to this is for children who have a medical condition, such as diabetes, where a smartphone is used to monitor and record a child's health.)* When referring to Smartphones we include other internet enabled device, including air tags, tablets, smartwatches.
- **Emergency Contact:** In case of emergencies, parents can contact the school office, and the school will facilitate communication with the child.
- **Older Children:** Children in Years 5 or 6 will be permitted to bring a phone to school, if they travel to and from school independently. This must be a phone which only has the capability to make phone calls and send single text messages and must not be internet enabled. It must be switched off before the child enters the school premises and handed to the class teacher to store safely. The school takes no responsibility for any loss or damage to the phone whilst it is on school premises.
- **Trips and Visits (including residential trips):** Children will not be permitted to bring any phone on a school trip, or any other internet enabled device, including air tags, tablets, smartwatches. It is at the discretion of the headteacher if digital cameras are allowed.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Staff:** All staff are responsible for enforcing this policy. Volunteers must alert a member of staff if they witness a breach of this policy.

Use of Smartphones by Staff:

- Staff are not permitted to make or receive calls or send texts during contact time. Use of personal smartphones must be restricted to non-contact time and areas where children are not present (e.g., staff room).
- It is at the Headteacher's discretion to allow staff to use their phone for specific reasons, such as a doctor's appointment during the school day.
- We encourage all staff to be mindful of being on their phones during social times and suggest they make every effort to have social contact with others.

Use of Smartphones by Parents, Volunteers, and Visitors:

- Parents, volunteers, and visitors must adhere to the school's smartphone policy while on school premises. Phones should be used responsibly and not during school activities.

- It is at the Headteacher's discretion to allow parents to use digital devices to take photographs or film school events.

Loss, Theft, or Damage:

- The school is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of any phone brought into school

Suggested Alternatives to Smartphones (as of July 2025):

Nokia 105

Nokia 5710

Nokia 2660

The Light Phone II

Please note, this is a short list of known phones at the time of writing and phone companies are regularly bringing out new products, so parents and carers are advised to research recommendations from other organisations such as: https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives

https://www.papayaparents.com/solutions#anchor-link-Basic

Further Guidance

This policy has been prepared using research and recommendations from the below sources:

Smartphone Free Childhood: https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/

The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt: https://jonathanhaidt.com/anxious-generation/

PAPAYA: https://www.papayaparents.com/

FAQs

Can my child bring a Smartphone to school if it doesn't have a SIM card in it, or if all the APPs are disabled?

No. We are not allowing any Smartphones, whether they are internet enabled or not. We will not accept any phones on site which have the capability of being internet enabled.

My child already has a Smartphone and I want them to walk to school by themselves. I can't afford to buy them a different phone, so can they still use this one?

No. We kindly ask that you:

- provide them with a phone that is not a Smartphone. One of these can be purchased for as little as £24.00,
- arrange for them to walk with a friend or family member until you can provide this, or
- walk with them until a different phone can be provided, or
- allow them to walk without a phone for the time being

My child needs a phone for safety on their way to and from school

We understand - every family wants to keep their child safe. But a basic phone (calls and texts only) is sufficient for this and doesn't expose them to the risks of social media and the internet. Smartphones can also be a distraction for children if they are using them while walking, causing them to not concentrate while crossing roads etc. Smartphones can also make children targets for thieves, so not having a smartphone may actually be safer for our children.

If my child doesn't have a smartphone, won't they be socially isolated?

We do understand that the peer pressure is real. But we would advocate that children should focus on building friendships that are rooted in real connection, rather than online relationships which can be focused on status and likes. They can still keep in touch through calls and texts, but the meaningful moments happen face-to-face – leading to deeper, more genuine relationships.

What if my child has a medical condition and needs a smartphone?

If a child needs a smartphone for health reasons, then of course they should have one. The goal of this policy isn't to take away essential tools, but to help children grow and thrive free from addictive technology.

I want my child to be tech literate, won't I be holding them back if they don't have a smartphone?

Being tech-savvy isn't about scrolling through TikTok – it's about knowing how to **use technology productively.** Children can build digital skills through schoolwork, coding programs, and creative tools like music or video editing. The best way to prepare children for the digital world is teaching them to think critically about technology, not just giving them unlimited access to it.

.